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ROMAN INTERCOURSE WITH IRELAND.

IN our last number there is a paper by Mr. Thomas Wright, the well-known antiquary, on the *True Assiguation of Bronze Weapons*, which had been read before the British Association at Birmingham in 1865. The next article in the review is a notice of Professor Sven Nilsson's, the celebrated Swedish anthropologist, work on the *Primitive Inhabitants of Scandinavia*, in which the manufacture of bronze implements and weapons is directly applied to the Phœnicians, who, according to the professor, established factories, introduced Baal worship, built temples, and remained in Scandinavia till, by intermixture, they became totally absorbed in the mass of the native population.

There is, in all probability, no person in England holding a higher position, as regards some branches of archæology, than Mr. Wright; and most certainly there is no one from whom we would more deferentially presume to differ. Nevertheless, we feel compelled to contradict him most flatly and pointedly in one, and not the least important, of the sentences contained in his paper. Speaking of Ireland, he says, "Where, by the way, it has been somewhat too hastily asserted that the Roman arms never penetrated, seeing that we know little of the *history* of our islands under the Romans; that Juvenal, speaking as of a fact generally known, asserts—

‘Arma quidem ultra

Littora Juvernæ promovimus,’—

and that Roman antiquities are now found in Ireland."

To say that we know little of the history of our islands, under the Romans, is simply begging the question altogether. What we know is from the Roman historians alone; and we most decidedly deny that anything at all worthy of the name of a Roman antiquity has been discovered in Ireland. Of course, if the bronze, leaf-shaped swords be Roman antiquities, as Mr. Wright asserts, they are found more plentifully in Ireland than in any other part of the British islands; most of the leaf-shaped swords, now in the British Museum, were found in Ireland. But let us see what the historian says. Tacitus, the son-in-law and, we may say, panegyrist of Agricola, tells us that in the fifth summer's campaign (A.D. 82) Agricola made an expedition by sea.

"He embarked in the first Roman vessel that had ever crossed the estuary, and having penetrated into regions till then unknown, he defeated the inhabitants in several engagements, and lined the coast which lies opposite to Ireland with a body of troops; not so much

from an apprehension of danger as with a view to future objects. He saw that Ireland, lying between Britain and Spain, and at the same time convenient to the ports of Gaul, might prove a valuable acquisition, capable of giving an easy communication, and of course strength and union to provinces disjoined by nature."

The estuary that Agricola embarked upon and crossed was the estuary of the Clyde. A glance at a map is quite sufficient to acquaint us with what Tacitus meant by that part of Britain *quæ Hiberniam aspicit*. There cannot be a shadow of doubt that Agricola wintered his army in the peninsula formed by Lough Ryan and the Bay of Luce. Indeed, the remains of the earth works he threw up at the narrow isthmus between the above-mentioned bay and lough to prevent a surprise in force, according to the predatory tactics of his enemies, are still in existence. There Agricola passed the winter of 82-3 A.D., while the *Voluntii* of the Irish coast, in all probability, kept anxious watch and ward, gazing from hill and artificial mound to espy the first movements of the dreaded and world famous war.

Agricola experienced no difficulty in obtaining information respecting the country he intended to invade from merchants, who were well acquainted with its coasts and harbours. Like an old edition of an old story, a fugitive Irish prince was already in Agricola's camp, whom the clever and politic Roman, under a show of friendship, detained to be used as a fitting tool when occasion served.* Agricola was confident of success. Tacitus, who relates the story, says that he frequently heard him declare that a single legion, with a modicum of auxiliaries, would quite suffice for the conquest of Ireland. And such an occurrence, he continued, would greatly contribute to bridle the stubborn Britons, who then would see with dismay the Roman arms every where triumphant, and every spark of freedom extinguished round their coast.†

But it was not to be. Instead of invading Ireland in the spring of 83,‡ Agricola was compelled to lead his forces to the eastern shores of Scotland to repel the Northern Britons, who during the winter had penetrated the line of forts previously constructed by the Roman general, and made harassing inroads into the southern districts, then under Roman sway and protection. Perceiving, then, that Scotland must be completely conquered previous to his carrying on operations against

* Agricola expulsum seditione domestica unum ex Regulis gentis exceperat ac specie amicitiae in occasionem retinebat.

† "Idque etiam adversus Britanniam profuturam, si Romana ubique arma, et veluti e conspectu libertas tolleretur."

‡ There is a difference of one year in assigning the dates to the numerical order of Agricola's campaigns. The above is, however, the generally received date, and is sufficiently accurate for our purpose.

Ireland, Agricola occupied the summer of 83 A.D. in subduing Kinross and Fife, as a necessary preparatory movement towards his grand object of reducing the entire northern part of Britain in the following year.

In 84 A.D. Agricola, his right flank supported by his eastern fleet, marching northwards, fought and won his great battle with Galgacus, and this victory gave him command of all Britain. The fleet, by Agricola's orders, sailed round the north of Scotland, took possession of the Orkneys and came into the Irish Channel, surveying the coasts and collecting information by the way. His motive in sending the fleet round was connected with his intended invasion of Ireland; but Domitian, jealous of the great General's fame, recalled him to Rome, and the terse and talented Tacitus had no more to relate of his father-in-law's deeds in these countries.

Though Cæsar spoke of Britain as an island, the Romans had no positive knowledge on the subject till Agricola accidentally discovered the fact by a remarkable event that took place during the Galloway campaign of the year 82. A cohort of Usipean* auxiliaries mutinied, murdered their officers, seized three small vessels and put to sea. The pilots, with true Roman firmness, refusing to aid the deserters, were put to death; and the latter ignorant of navigation, drifted about at the mercy of the winds and waves, occasionally landing on the coast to plunder provisions. One of those vessels actually drifted round the north of Scotland into the German Ocean, and from thence into the Baltic, thus practically proving the insular character of Britain. Some of the wretched men were still alive at the end of this extraordinary voyage, having subsisted on the dead bodies of their companions. Seized as pirates, and sold as slaves, they were soon sent back to the Roman authorities; but on account of their sufferings and remarkable voyage, they were received not as mutineers and deserters, but as heroes and explorers.

Neither Tacitus nor Dion, who also tells us the same story, says where these mutineers started from. But that they went from the coast of Galloway there cannot be a doubt. And as early, accidental discoveries are of great importance to the anthropologist, I may just allude here to a still more remarkable fact related by Pliny, how certain natives of India who had embarked on a commercial voyage were shipwrecked on the coast of Germany and given to Metellius by the King of the Servians. Whether those adventurers had found their way round the Cape of Good Hope or made a north-east passage I need not stay to inquire. The story will be found in the second book.

* The country in which the modern Cleves is situated.

This then is what history tells us of one intended invasion of Ireland by the Romans. After the departure of Agricola, the history of the Romans in Britain is for a considerable time a complete blank ; we do not even positively know who was his successor in the Pro-prætorship ; but as it is known that he left the province in peaceable subjection, it is supposed in this tranquil state of affairs the Romans passed over into and subdued Ireland. This fancy, for it is nothing more, is founded on the lines in Juvenal quoted by Mr. Wright ; for where the historian is silent, the satirist is at least the next best authority. Juvenal, when contrasting the power and progress of the Roman arms abroad, with the shameful and enervating vices prevalent at home, says, “ We have, indeed, carried our arms beyond the shores of Ireland.” This is just what he says, neither more nor less, and it sounds very like a poetical license. That the Romans may have claimed a nominal sovereignty over Ireland, through the submission of some exiled chieftain is probable enough ; but that they ever occupied any part of the island by force is positively contradicted by the utter absence of their usual great public and private works, which ever seem, even at this day, to have been constructed in defiance of time itself. If Agricola had landed with his small force of a legion and a modicum of auxiliaries, what would he have done ? He would have built forts and roads, received certain tribes as auxiliaries, and pitted them against the others, and would no doubt have reduced the island to subjection in a short time. But not one trace of a Roman exists on the soil of Ireland, not one fort, one road, one earthwork, one engraved stone ; not one of the well-known Roman relics, so plentifully found in England and Scotland, have ever been seen in Ireland. Scarcely even a Roman coin has been found, those *denarii* which the Romans seem to have sown broad-cast amongst their remains in England.

We have, however, a very significant glimpse of the relations existing between the Irish and Romans during the tranquil periods after the departure of Agricola, which is utterly incompatible with subjection on the one side, or domination on the other. Four legions only, with their attendant auxiliaries, were required to maintain order in Britain, and they were permanently posted in the places which they retained till almost the end of the Roman dominion. Of these the twentieth was stationed at Deva, the modern Chester, to hold in restraint the Welsh, the Brigantian mountaineers of Cumberland and Westmoreland, and protect the country from the Irish pirates, who usually landed in the river Dee. The second legion was stationed at the Silurian Isca (Caerleon in Monmouthshire) to keep in check the unconquerable Welsh “ mountain-people,” and defend the shores of the Severn against the Irish pirates. For the Romans, in their own

estimation at least, were warriors and conquerors, the outside barbarians were murderers, robbers, and pirates. And it appears highly probable that the Roman Retigonum, now the modern Stranraer, commanding the isthmus between Lough Ryan and the Bay of Luce, was a most important defensive post, established to prevent an advance into the interior of Scotland by any Irish piratical invaders who might land at any point between Corsewall and the Mull of Galloway.

Towards the close of the second and early part of the third century was the palmy era of the Roman rule in Britain, which then was certainly the richest and most flourishing province of the whole empire. The abundance and variety of mineral wealth, the luxuriant crops afforded by a virgin soil to even an inferior cultivation, the adaptability of the earths for ceramic manufactures, attracted numbers of adventurers from all parts of the empire to the British shores. Merchants, mechanics, miners, and agriculturists led the way, and were soon followed by professional men, architects, artists and artisans, as labour and industry created wealth and luxury; and then magnificent towns, temples, palaces, villas, baths, and theatres rose up over a peaceable and productive province. It is most reasonable to suppose, indeed, it would be contrary to the very nature of things to doubt that the wealthy, intelligent, mining, manufacturing, and mercantile Romano-British people maintained a considerable traffic with Ireland; and that many of them visited it as political envoys, traders, travellers in search of information, or, with the errant disposition of man, as physicians or handicraftsmen seeking adventure in a country less advanced in civilisation than their own. Ptolemy's description of Ireland, though written in the second century, is surprisingly copious and exact. He tells us of the coasts, inland towns, and native tribes, leaving hydrographical accuracy out of the question, it is probably not too much to say that the Romans knew as much, or even more, of Ireland than we now do of Madagascar.

The early state of what is called Irish art, the interleaved triangle, the star of eight points, the wave and spiral have evidently been acquired from Roman specimens, which may very well have happened without any Roman conquest of the island. A quantity of silver coins, all Roman, with some engraved specimens of silver metal, were lately found in Ireland; these were unmistakably the property of some travelling silversmith. A Roman medicine stamp has also been found in Ireland, denoting that most probably some travelling physician had found his way thither. Some sixty of those stamps have been found in France, Germany, Africa, England and Scotland; but, as I believe, like the bronze swords, not one has been discovered in Italy.

Some of the bronze leaf-shaped swords in the Museum of the Royal

Irish Academy are so sharp as to distinctly testify their readiness for a lethal use even at the present day. There is a remarkable woodcut, the pride of the collection of the late Mr. Douce, representing six Irishmen, with the imprint DRAWN AFTER THE QUICKE. A row is just commencing, two of them have drawn their swords, and they are leaf-shaped; those swords that are undrawn, still in their scabbards, represent exactly those which are upon the tombs of the Irish King O'Connor at Roscommon, as engraved in *Walker's Historical Essay*. The engraving shows even the very small handle of the sword, it being held by the person on the extreme right by only two fingers, or at the most three. The features are unmistakably Irish; it cannot be older than the Elizabethan period, and it bears every mark of having been drawn from the quick or living subjects.

The Irish historians relate stories of occurrences that happened in Ireland previous to the deluge, so we may very well leave them alone. General Vallancey in the last century, struck by what he considered the most anomalous circumstance of writers endeavouring to show that the Irish were a Celtic nation, derived them at once from the Magogian Scythians, who, according to the General, were the first astronomers, navigators, and traders after the Flood. They settled first in Armenia, sailed down the Euphrates to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, finding their way into the Red Sea, and eventually into the Mediterranean, where, after sailing round Africa and discovering the Cape 600 years before our present era, they established themselves as Phœnicians at Tyre and Sidon. To a people that had sailed round the Cape the discovery and settlement of Ireland was but a trifle. Sir William Betham, in almost our own time, derives the Irish from the Phœnicians through the Etrurians; and speaking of Vallancey, says: "The result of his labours are an invaluable magazine of materials, of which a critical and judicious writer may avail himself with great profit and advantage."

These words almost seem prophetic in their application to Nilsson's work. He is in fact the critical and judicious writer, who has availed himself with profit and advantage of the results of Vallancey's labours. There is, however, a little known but much better Richmond in the field. One Aylett Sammes in 1676 published a large folio work, entitled *Britannia Antiqua Illustrata*, in which he distinctly derives the early inhabitants of Britain from the Phœnicians. Curiously enough, while the previously-mentioned writers depend particularly upon philology, for the results acquired by them, stating that the language of a nation is the most recognisable of its remains, forming a chain of evidence that cannot be totally lost, displaced, or obscured, that even after the people are gone and lost for ever, it still remains in the names

of places in the country,—Sammes as boldly and utterly disclaims it. He says: "But if in truth I may deliver my opinion, there is no way more fallacious and deceitful than deriving the names of places from the language of the people, for I scarce think there is a town but by fertile heads may be derived from some word or another that is now in use among the present inhabitants; every place yielding something either by situation, soil, prospect, custom, manner, a battle or building from whence they may be deduced."

SPANISH ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

TRANSLATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN,—The existence in public life of the Spanish Anthropological Society commences to-day, and at so important a moment it seems but natural, that he who has been chosen your President, more from a feeling of friendship on your part than merit on his, should address a few words to you. I feel the responsibility of the undertaking, and without false affectation I can assure you that I hesitated long before accepting a charge whose weight I shrank from having imposed upon me. At length I have yielded to your wishes, but you must be contented to accept the slight sketch I am about to trace out for you, in place of the magnificent picture which some other, more competent than I, would have laid before you.

I appreciate the picture, and would paint it, if I could only realise it to you, as it passes like a lightning flash through my own mind; but, as Foscolo said, in one of his well-known books, "Ah, if I were but a painter!" so now, at this moment, struck by my own weakness, I exclaim, "Ah, if I were but learned!" If it were but in my power I would, with a few magical touches, draw out for you a plan of the voyage we are going to undertake. The spirit of the age, or as it might be well called, the universal passion for truth, has assembled us together to attempt an undertaking of immense magnitude in proportion to the mediocrity of the materials we have at our disposal. But this happens frequently; great deeds are wrought by small means. The child typifies the man; Columbus, in a fragile bark, discovered a new world, and a few poor fishermen, inspired by God, opened for man the gates to Paradise.

Why does this happen? because in reality there is no such thing as uniformity of material; there is no lever, no instrument of physical force, which can equal for marvellous power the strength of thought